

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 L-03 H-01 EB-08 CIAE-00
INR-10 NSAE-00 COME-00 DOTE-00 OMB-01 TRSE-00
PA-01 ICA-11 /063 W
-----046040 171410Z /53
P 171201Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7142

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DEPT. ALSO PASS DOT FOR SEC ADAMS, FRA, AND AMTRAK

E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: ETRN, TECH, JA
SUBJECT: JAPAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS' (JNR) FEELER
. ON PROVIDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO
. AMTRAK

SUMMARY: JNR PRESIDENT HAS VISITED AMBASSADOR TO
FIND OUT WHETHER USG AND AMTRAK WOULD BE INTERESTED
IN RECEIVING EXPANDED TECHNOLOGICAL ASSISTANCE
FROM THE JNR ON VIRTUALLY A GRATIS BASIS.
ALTHOUGH PRESIDENT TAKAGI HAS NOT YET OBTAINED
THE AGREEMENT OF ALL CONCERNED JNR AND JAPANESE
GOVT. OFFICIALS, IT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO HAVE, AS
SOON AS POSSIBLE, SOME INDICATION OF INTEREST
FROM DOT/AMTRAK OFFICIALS IF, IN FACT, WARRANTED.
OWING TO JNR'S OWN FINANCIAL PLIGHT, SOME GOJ
OFFICIALS HAVE RESERVATIONS OVER THE APPROPRIATENESS
OF THE IDEA AND THE JNR HAS SUGGESTED THAT ANY U.S.
INTEREST BE CONVEYED DIRECTLY BY THE EMBASSY TO
THE MOFA AND POSSIBLY THE MOT TO ASSIST THE
PROJECT ALONG. EMBASSY BELIEVES THIS WOULD BE
APPROPRIATE ONLY IF OUR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST
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IS AND CAN BE CONSTRUED AS "OFFICIAL"; I.E.
ON BEHALF OF THE USG OR DOT AS WELL AS AMTRAK.
REQUEST DEPARTMENT'S GUIDANCE. JNR PRESIDENT
STATED THAT IF FAVORABLE EXPRESSION OF U.S.
INTEREST RECEIVED QUICKLY, PM FUKUDA MIGHT
WANT TO MENTION PROJECT TO PRESIDENT CARTER
DURING THEIR SUMMIT MEETING. EVEN SHOULD WE

CONVEY PROMPT NOTICE OF INTEREST TO JAPANESE, HOWEVER, EMBASSY DOUBTS THAT OFFER COULD COME TO FRUITION BY THAT DATE. END SUMMARY.

1. RECENTLY, JNR PRESIDENT FUMIO TAKAGI CALLED ON AMBASSADOR MANSFIELD TO CONVEY HIS PERSONAL CONVICTION THAT THE JNR SHOULD PROVIDE AS MUCH ASSISTANCE AS POSSIBLE TO THE U.S. PASSENGER RAILROAD SYSTEM AND, IN PARTICULAR, TO AMTRAK. RECALLING THE HELP GIVEN BY THE U.S. TO RESTORE THE JAPANESE RAILWAYS TO OPERATION AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR, TAKAGI SAID THAT HE FEELS THAT THE TIME HAS NOW COME TO RETURN THE FAVOR, PARTICULARLY SINCE THE JNR NOW OPERATES THE MOST ADVANCED HIGH-SPEED PASSENGER TRAIN IN THE WORLD (THE SHINKANSEN OR BULLET TRAIN) AND SINCE AMTRAK IS TRYING HARD TO RESTORE THE QUALITY OF ITS PASSENGER SYSTEM.

2. TAKAGI EXPLAINED THAT THE JNR HAS ALREADY BEEN FURNISHING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO AMTRAK FOR ITS NORTHEAST CORRIDOR PROJECT (NECP) UNDER COMMERCIAL CONTRACT. HOWEVER HE WOULD NOW LIKE TO PROVIDE ADDITIVE, MORE EXTENSIVE EXPERTISE ON A NON-COMMERCIAL BASIS. HE SUGGESTED THAT, INITIALLY, A TWOPHASE PROJECT BE SET UP WHEREBY A NUMBER OF AMTRAK ENGINEERS WOULD FIRST COME LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO JAPAN (PROBABLY FOR SEVERAL MONTHS) TO STUDY THOROUGHLY THE INTRICACIES OF THE BULLET TRAIN'S TECHNOLOGY AND OPERATION. THIS WOULD BE FOLLOWED BY A RETURN VISIT OF JNR ENGINEERS TO THE U.S. WHERE THEY WOULD STUDY AMTRAK IN THE SAME DEPTH. AFTER THIS EXCHANGE, THE TWO RAILROADS WOULD DECIDE ON THE BEST WAYS TO PROCEED WITH FURTHER, MORE SUBSTANTIVE COOPERATION. SOME OF THIS FOLLOW-ON COOPERATION, PRESUMABLY, WOULD ALSO BE ON A GRATIS BASIS BUT DETAILS WOULD BE WORKED OUT LATER.

3. PRESIDENT TAKAGI INDICATED THAT BEFORE HE PURSUED THIS IDEA FURTHER AND SOUGHT TO BUILD CONSENSUS FOR IT AMONG OTHER HIGH-LEVEL JNR AND CONCERNED GOJ OFFICIALS, IT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO HAVE, AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, SOME INDICATION FROM DOT/AMTRAK OFFICIALS AS TO WHETHER THEY WOULD BE INTERESTED AND RECEPTIVE TO SUCH GRANT OF EXPERTISE. ALTHOUGH SOME TOP GOJ OFFICIALS SUCH AS MIN USHIBA AND TRANSPORT MIN FUKANAGA HAVE, ACCORDING TO TAKAGI, BEEN BRIEFED ON HIS IDEA AND "SUPPORT" IT, OTHER JAPANESE OFFICIALS HAVE RESERVATIONS AS TO WHETHER

IT'S APPROPRIATE FOR THE JNR TO MAKE SUCH EXPERTISE AVAILABLE GRATIS, GIVEN ITS OWN SEVERE FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES. HE SUGGESTED THAT ANY U.S. INTEREST BE CONVEYED DIRECTLY BY THE EMBASSY TO THE MOFA AND POSSIBLY THE MOT TO ASSIST THE PROJECT ALONG.

4. COMMENT: EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS THROUGH INFORMAL SOURCES THAT DOT AND AMTRAK ALREADY ARE AWARE OF JNR'S DESIRE TO INCREASE THE SCOPE OF ITS ASSISTANCE TO AMTRAK. THERE ARE TWO QUESTIONS ON WHICH WE

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SEEK DEPARTMENT'S GUIDANCE: 1) IS DOT/AMTRAK INTERESTED IN PROPOSED JNR OFFER AND 2) IF THE ANSWER IS AFFIRMATIVE, SHOULD THIS INTEREST BE CONVEYED ONLY TO THE JNR OR ALSO TO INTERESTED MINISTRIES SUCH AS MOFA AND MOT. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THE LATTER COURSE WOULD BE APPROPRIATE ONLY IF OUR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST IS AND CAN BE CONSTRUED AS "OFFICIAL"; I.E., MADE ON BEHALF OF THE USG OR DOT AS WELL AS AMTRAK. REQUEST DEPARTMENT'S GUIDANCE.

5. MR. TAKAGI STATED THAT IF A "FAVORABLE" EXPRESSION OF U.S. INTEREST WERE RECEIVED QUICKLY, PM FUKUDA MIGHT WANT TO MENTION PROJECT TO PRESIDENT CARTER DURING THEIR SUMMIT MEETING. EVEN SHOULD WE CONVEY PROMPT NOTIFICATION OF U.S. INTEREST, EMBASSY SERIOUSLY DOUBTS THAT, GIVEN LABORIOUS JAPANESE CONSENSUS-BUILDING PROCESS, PROPOSAL COULD COME TO FRUITION BY THAT DATE.

MANSFIELD

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